Arguing that the reactions to sea serpent stories reveal some key differences in the world-views and lifeways of Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of the Pacific Northwest, this essay examines how the epistemology of relationality contests hierarchical binaries, attempted cultural erasure, and ownership of place.

Do You See It *Too?* Relationality in Pacific Northwest Sea Serpent Lore

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The 11 October 1933 *Victoria Daily Times* account of a giant sea serpent in Cadboro Bay, British Columbia was likely nothing more than a publicity stunt by news editor Archie Wills. It was a few months after the Loch Ness Monster became an international celebrity that Wills reported several supposed sightings of an eighty-foot sea serpent with a horse-like head. The creature was named for the local bay and its dinosaur traits: Cadborosaurus. Wills hoped stories of "Caddie" would increase tourism to Victoria, boost sales for his struggling newspaper, and distract residents from an abundance of bad news about the Great Depression (Loxton and Prothero 241). Although the sea monster did not make the region legendary as "Nessie" did Loch Ness in Scotland, the story was picked up by several major media outlets, including the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine. Directly across the narrow waterway, residents of Port Angeles, Washington were not to be outdone. Just a few months after Wills's story, Thomas Guptill depicted a giant sea serpent in a painting that became a popular local postcard. His Edizgigantus was named for Ediz Hook, a

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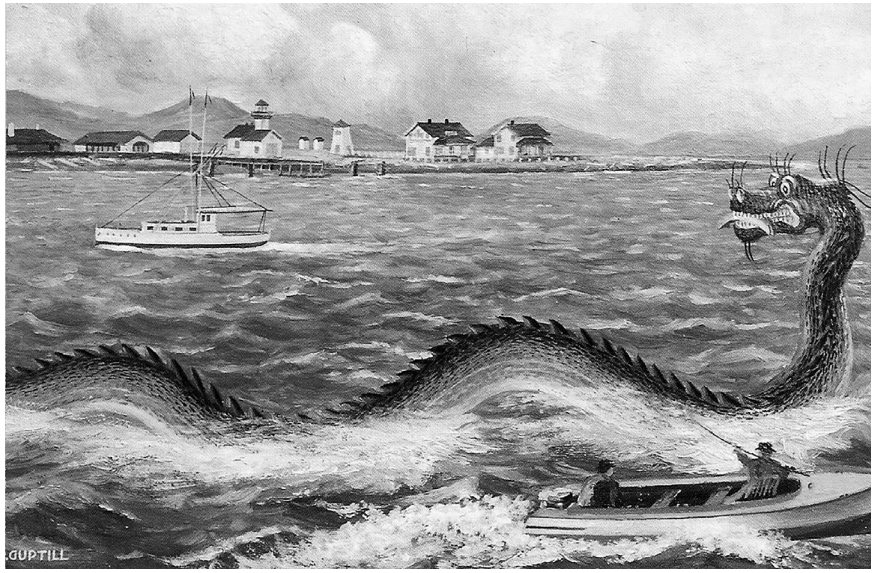

1. Thomas Guptill, "Edizgigantus," 1934. Postcard. Public domain. Photograph by Alma Chong.

three-mile sand spit that extends from Port Angeles into the Salish Sea. Clearly, settler-colonials have had an appetite for stories of the supernatural, even if many consider the creature a scientific anomaly, an optical illusion, or a hoax.

The stories, however, began long before these towns existed. For millennia, Indigenous peoples have recounted the existence of giant sea creatures along the coasts of what is now Washington State and British Columbia and through the Salish Sea: Puget Sound, the Strait of Georgia, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The mysterious serpent-like being has acquired many names; it is known as Sisiutl by the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations on the central coast of British Columbia, Salt-chuck Oluk by the Squamish and Say Nuth Kway by the Tsleil Waututh near Vancouver, Haietlik by the Nuu-chah-nulth on Vancouver Island, Hahektoak by the Makah and T'abale by the Quileute on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, and A'yahos by the Duwamish of Seattle. Sightings have been reported by people who know the waterways, including experienced fishermen and professional zoologists. Encounter narratives still circulate within local communities via cultural lessons by Tribal Elders, tall tales by longtime residents, and readership boosting by newspaper publishers. Regardless of their veracity, these stories epitomize some key differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistemologies and relationships to place. Both groups' ways of knowing value deeper learning about all entities that inhabit an ecosystem, yet each represents a reality

"rooted in radically different cultural premises" (J.S. Lutz 10). Euro-Western methodology is rooted in empiricism and individualism (what a sea serpent is and isn't), while Indigenous methodology, despite adapting over the years to the academy, is rooted in reciprocal relationality (what this spirit being represents and teaches).

In this essay, I do not intend to present these world-views as monolithic, though I did notice a pattern during my research: most settler-colonial residents and academics hesitated or refused to speak with me because they considered the supposed sea creature nothing but childish nonsense, while members of multiple tribes hesitated or refused to speak with me because they considered the being sacred. As Shawn Wilson and Gregory Younging suggest, I need to be careful to seek Indigenous perspectives and represent them accurately, not just provide my own settler-colonial "information" (Younging 1). In fact, I suspended my research on this topic for several years out of a concern that I was not fully aware of my own Eurocentric perspective. Before I resumed my investigation of these stories, I spent time meeting and listening to Indigenous storytellers, reading about Indigenous epistemologies, and learning about their characteristics and impacts on academic and cultural advancement. Thus, I present myself as a beginning learner of Indigenous ways of knowing, and I hope this essay prompts further respectful discourse by working with, not speaking for, Indigenous knowledges. My goal is to examine Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on the existence of this serpent-like being as a way to better understand multiple conceptions of the world, particularly how these epistemologies express relationship with place.

For both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents, the elusive serpent entity denotes the sea's mysteries, humanity's adventurous spirit, and the complicated relationship between people and the natural world. In addition to many oral and written narratives, the giant sea serpent's notoriety and symbolic importance make it a frequent subject of Pacific Northwest visual arts. One non-Indigenous artistic depiction is the sculpture of a multi-humped, horse-faced serpent pursuing a skeletal Viking that decorates Seattle's Shilshole Bay Marina. This marina is also the location of a large monument to Norse oceanic explorer Leif Erikson. In 1906, residents in the nearby Ballard district famously circulated a photograph of what they claimed was the beast's corpse found on the Shilshole Bay beach, which turned out to be a hoax (Sloan 2). A more whimsical rendition is the bright green and yellow jungle gym enjoyed by children at the Cadboro Bay Gyro Park in Victoria, British Columbia. A painted wooden sculpture "swims" out of the grass near Sidney, British Columbia; on Lochside Drive, perhaps a nod to its Scottish cousin.

Indigenous artists from local tribes provide a number of different perspectives of this being, yet each utilizes an epistemology based in place and cultural heritage (Miller 3). Dale Faulstich, a master carver for several tribes on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, states that the double-headed serpent motif is fairly generic, and differences in its artistic representation reflect a carver's or painter's inspiration and aesthetic choices. It plays an important role in both high ceremony and everyday activities, regularly featured on canoes, drums, belts, bracelets, headbands, spears, dancers' masks, and serving dishes, including a Southern Kwagiutl feast dish in which "the Sisiutl's tongues are removable ladles" (Halpin 17). A physically and spiritually powerful force, the figure appears on public pieces like the Ga'akstalas Totem Pole in Vancouver and personal items like the blankets on display at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria. The sea serpent appears on family crests for the Makah and several other tribes. Its image functions as a spiritual guardian when painted over doorways (Stewart 35), or carved into archways, as at the entrance of the Longhouse ʔaʔɬ̓ʷustəŋáẇ̓txʷ House of Learning on the Peninsula College campus in Port Angeles, Washington.

Commonly portrayed as having two heads to acknowledge life and mortality, the image of the serpent promulgates the wisdom of the natural world. It reminds coastal tribes that local waterways not only provide food and transportation, but also cause death and destruction through storms and flooding. This link to the past is "an integral component of a satisfying identity. It is a connection to the considerable power of *inter*connection" (Harmon 48). Plus, it is a source of agency in the reclamation of place and traditional activities done there. For example, members of the Makah tribe display the figure when they participate in the annual canoe journey with other Northwest coast tribes, or when they mourn those killed after turbulent seas capsize a fishing boat or sweep a person off the shore while clamming, which has happened as recently as 2017 (Major). Respect for nature as a powerful force leads Indigenous peoples to honour the sea's spiritual guardians and connect with nature's regular cycles (Reid 5). Indigenous knowledges recognize the importance of ecological balance and the danger of not maintaining that balance.

The serpent-like figure also reveals life lessons, exciting self-realization about one's strength of character and commitment to the community. In Kwakwaka'wakw stories, the Sisiutl gives strength to the warrior and healing power to the shaman, yet it will turn the unworthy and faint-hearted to stone with a glance. This terrifying "soul searcher" (Cameron 38) forces people to acknowledge their flaws and face their fears: "He hounds those who flee from themselves" (Collard and Contrucci 122). In the Tsleil-Waututh tradition, one can defeat the Say Nuth Kway only by acquiring

2. Dale Faulstich, "Longhouse Gateway," 2007. Wood. Photograph by Rich Riski. Used with written permission from artist.

personal power through discipline and hardship (Arnett and Morin 117). It appears to encourage the community to be proactive in response to danger, such as famine and Euro-Western values (118). Lower Elwha S'Klallam storyteller Roger Fernandes suggests that, as in the past, oral narratives delivered today are meant to prompt deep personal insight into the nature of reality, challenging listeners to analyze their identity and their relationships.

Encounter stories are meant as allegory to teach courage, humility, and self-improvement, yet some Indigenous people claim to have confronted the spirit being in person. Whether they have or not misses the point, as Sarah Langs articulates in regard to the Ballard sea serpent hoax of 1906: "since the point of legends is to excite our imaginations, does it even matter [that it was a hoax]?" I do not mean to imply that Indigenous encounters are hoaxes, only that actual sightings need not be shared by others to convey important cultural and spiritual instruction to the recipient and the community. Also, I do not want to suggest Indigenous communities are defined by a romanticized spirituality. These communities use critical analysis as a tool for knowledge acquisition, but unlike settler-colonial scholarly communities, their skepticism does not cause them to discount human interactions with supernatural beings. In fact, stories of ancestors gaining powers from spirits are an expression of pride and

respect, for the ancestor and for the storyteller as a descendant who honours that history (Harmon 49).

Members of Indigenous communities can exist in the physical and metaphysical worlds with beings like the shape-shifting Sisiutl because, in their epistemologies, ancient knowledge cooperates with contemporary knowledge. Thus, the communication between traditional legendary events and current personal experiences makes oral narratives, including encounters with supernatural beings, "more akin to the whiteman's biblical truths than to his fairy tales" (Thompson and Egesdal xxxii). Wilson champions the value of cooperation between Euro-Western and Indigenous epistemologies. He also demonstrates it in the style of his scholarly writing, blending the theoretical and the relational into one academic-narrative voice (9). For Fernandes, Indigenous educators and storytellers recognize that all people need these complementary types of learning. They are two different points on a continuum working in concert: the empirical-logical helps a person "understand how to live in the world" and the emotional-spiritual helps a person "explain the meaning of things" from a personal, moral, ecological perspective.

Wilson suggests that being a scholar or a citizen among Euro-Westerners requires learning hegemonic scientific and cultural epistemologies. He reminds Indigenous scholars to resist Euro-Western colonization, which imposes its stories and values on Indigenous cultures and their ancestral landscapes. This epistemology disparages mythical entities like giant, mysterious sea serpents as absurd superstition, mistaken identity, or publicity stunts. However, some Euro-Westerner scholars are interested in learning more about the supernatural elements of their own ancestral past. Researchers study medieval European cartographers who put dragons and other supernatural creatures on maps to represent dangerous weather patterns and unknown territories. Others examine how ancient Greeks depicted the sea serpent as a primordial power in nature that taught "lessons about the dangers of sin" (Picanço 32). The question is whether this interest will bring a spiritual and relational element to the positivistic research paradigm.

Euro-Western epistemology has a long history of creating hierarchical binaries and using ethnocentrism to disrupt Indigenous experiences and ways of knowing. It seeks definitive, logical answers rather than employing open-ended oral narratives to force those in the audience to determine the meaning and resulting life lessons for themselves (Wilson 17; Fernandes). Joy Harjo expresses frustration at scientific rationalism's rejection of the supernatural in her poem "The Flood": "It had been years since I'd seen the watermonster, the snake who lived at the bottom of the lake. He had disappeared in the age of reason, as a mystery that never happened" (100). In the case

of the sea serpent, mainstream science also rejects non-Indigenous eyewitness experiences and discounts physical evidence like photographs and remains washed onto shore. Here is where a third voice joins the discussion. Among the discredited believers of the mystical being are scientists of cryptozoology, the "study of animals whose existence has yet to be proved" (Shermer). Paul LeBlond, professor emeritus of oceanography at the University of British Columbia and proud cryptozoologist, complains that "development and funding of a research program that embraces review of evidence, formulation of hypotheses, search strategy, and instrument design in what is, after all, a legitimate scientific question tends to be thwarted by the stigma of 'frivolity' that mars the subject, as well as by the absence of any obvious practical application" (51). The mainstream scientific community ridicules these efforts and refuses to accept cryptozoologists' work as legitimate science.

LeBlond and his colleagues, though, also rely on empiricism; they are Euro-Western scientists, trained to understand the sea serpent only in "rational" terms as a material object. Rather than accept it as a supernatural being, one that appears from the spirit world to impart cultural wisdom and then disappears, these scientists seek a flesh-and-blood creature whose biological uniqueness they can classify. Moreover, Euro-Western academics follow a long settler-colonial tradition of claiming ownership of place through attempted cultural erasure and renaming. In 2010, one cryptozoologist went as far as setting up twenty-four-hour video surveillance at Telegraph Bay in the Salish Sea to acquire empirical proof of Cadborosaurus's existence (North). Concrete evidence of an undocumented species means both acquiring individual acclaim and asserting possession over the space it inhabits. The other main interest is financial gain, as reported sightings generate publicity and might increase tourism via "the Loch Ness effect" (Andrews). These attitudes reduce a spiritual figure to a thing for study or consumption, removing its influence over reciprocal relationship-building. As a result, the being loses its ability to inspire a community or instruct individual behaviour.

As a relatively new resident of the Pacific Northwest, I am intrigued by these different epistemologies and how each asserts or contests the settler-colonizers' attempt to control and possess this place. For many non-Indigenous people, a two-headed, shape-shifting sea serpent is theoretical or heretical, unacceptable on either a material or a spiritual level. Lacking empirical evidence, it is branded as imaginary and either dismissed as a fairy tale or attacked as a threat to Euro-Westerners' scientific truths. This view denies the being's role as spirit guide to the community and strips it of all cultural power. Instead, local towns merely appropriate its likeness to adorn playground equipment and boost tourism. For many Indigenous peoples of the region, the being has an important impact regardless of whether it can be scientifically verified. As

3. Public art (artist anonymous). Wood. Public domain. Photograph by Tara Demers.

such, it substantiates humanity's obligation to the natural world, one that encourages a respect for place rather than a desire for ownership. As Makah poet Meredith Parker posits, "[Humans and animals] share this place along the water's edge" (34). This relationship encourages self-examination, a reconsideration of personal values and identity.

The main Indigenous perspective I will address is reciprocal relationality, promoted by several scholars and activists like Wilson and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. Wilson, a member of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in Manitoba, developed a deep understanding of relational accountability in order to create a new Indigenous research paradigm and gain a better sense of what it means to be Indigenous (13). Simpson, a member of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Nation in Ontario, champions reciprocal relationality as a form of resistance to colonialism, an alternative to "a violent backdrop of conquest, genocide, expansive dispossession, unfettered capitalist exploitation, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy and environmental apocalypse." She asserts that relationality places "the material and spiritual needs of the community" and the biosphere before the desires of the individual, establishing Indigenous nations as decolonized spaces where diverse peoples can "live their own visions of self determination and freedom." Sandy Grande argues that a "Red pedagogy" is necessarily

grounded in local narratives and ancestral epistemologies and "morally inspired by the deep connections among the Earth, its beings, and the spirit world" (35). For the Indigenous peoples located along the Salish Sea, the giant sea serpent has long been a key figure in oral narratives, elucidating traditional beliefs like the reciprocal relationship humans should cultivate with each other and the natural world.

According to Indigenous storytellers, this being fosters qualities like strength, courage, duty, and self-awareness, which are important for the relationships Wilson envisions. In addition, Shannon Thunderbird, an Elder of the Coast Tsimshian First Nations in northwest British Columbia, expresses that snake medicine is "about change, about creativity [...] about healthy sexual, physical, spiritual, and emotional energy. It is the energy of wholeness, spiritual knowing, and the ability to experience anything willingly and without resistance." For her, as well as for Wilson and Simpson, reciprocal relationships require emotional openness and healthy "energy." The Sisiutl offers a transformative and empowering experience, an opportunity to achieve wholeness and connect with cultural history and the biosphere. Continuing to tell traditional and contemporary narratives of interactions with sea spirits also demonstrates how specific locations connect people to supernatural powers that protect and heal whole communities (Arnett and Morin 101). These stories also contest Euro-Western ownership of landscape, one of the most important "identity-shaping forces" for Coast Salish peoples (Carlson 8). For them, "place has agency" and its power and wisdom helps "all forms of life move toward mutual recognition of, and responsibility for, their interrelationships" (Larsen and Johnson).

At the tip of the Olympic Peninsula, the Makah have "placed marine space at the center of their culture" (Reid 4). At home on the water, the Makah honour the place that provides their sustenance and transportation by painting or carving the Hahektoak on their canoes. Experience has taught them "when and where to hunt or gather food and materials in balance with life cycles" (Peterson 153). The Makah attribute their ability to navigate difficult seas and success at fishing and whaling to the maritime guardian spirits, particularly the shape-shifting serpent. Further east, the Lower Elwha S'Klallam people have relied on the Elwha River for ten thousand years. According to Tribal Elder Beatrice Charles, the river played a major role in all aspects of tribal members' lives: "what they ate, what they wore, what they built, their art, worship, [trade,] and healing arts. Even the tribe's name came from the river" (Mapes 23). The Thunderbird protects and punishes the Makah and Lower Elwha S'Klallam people with Lightning Snakes, prominent in local stories and art, such as the painting "Thunderbird and Lightning Snake" by carver and former Makah Tribal Chair Micah McCarty.

Maintaining this connection to place has grown to be more difficult and more important since first contact. Explorers brought disease and alcohol; settlers violently took control of the land and worked to force the people to abandon their culture through assimilation efforts like residential schools. Nevertheless, Indigenous peoples remain adamantly affiliated with their homeland (Miller 25), using local items like cedar bark for baskets and retelling traditional stories. In his poem "Home Holds My Heart," Brandan McCarty explains what draws him back from the city to the ocean and the Makah reservation: "I thirst for my culture" (49). As in ages past, some Makah still collect the shiny mica found on coastal beaches—the Hahektoak's discarded scales—to gain strength and courage (Stewart 35). Some display the image of the sea serpent on headbands or canoes to protect themselves and the community from physical and spiritual harm.

The stories also provide explanations for nature's mysteries. The Duwamish people have ancient stories of the A'yahos, a shape-shifting, double-headed serpent-like being that generated powerful earthquakes along the region's shallow faults for thousands of years. The being's energetic swimming can shake the earth and cause massive landslides around the Seattle area, as expressed in stories that match geologic evidence from over a thousand years ago. It may be coincidence that these stories have survived when so many others have not, but perhaps the Duwamish recognized the importance of commemorating these seismic events and affirming their spiritual import. As in other sea serpent stories, the A'yahos spirit power is both malevolent and benign, bringing luck and skill to some who encounter it and destroying others with a glance. Beyond providing an explanation for mysterious geologic activity, the supernatural creature influenced cultural practices: "Shaking was a central element in Puget Sound native medical practices and ceremonies, and [the] *a'yahos* […] was a central source of 'doctor' power" (Ludwin et al. 429). A highly respected ability in the community, doctor power meant that the shaman "pulled sickness out of people just like a'yahos would do" (Elmendorf 200). In the stories, those who face the A'yahos gain useful skills and self-assurance, while those who run from it become sick, both physically and spiritually (104). Character is measured by the person's reaction to an encounter, a mirror for one's responses to the challenges of everyday life.

The figure of the Lightning Snake is both a weapon of Thunderbird and a source of great cultural strength. Its sting "renders a massive whale helpless" (Shearar 68), which is vital for whale-hunting cultures. In addition to depicting the being on masks and drums, Makah and Nuu-chah-nulth whale hunters paint its likeness on canoes and then paint over it to hide its magic from their prey (Cote 107; Thunderbird). According to Chief Simon Lucas, Lightning Snake stories and ceremonial dances help the Nuu-chah-nulth teach younger generations to develop a reciprocal relationship

with the ocean and its life (Sanderson 226-27). This relationship requires sustainable and respectful fishing, as well as cooperation with others in the community. In Makah stories and dances, the sea serpent transforms itself into a self-propelled canoe to assist worthy Makah fishermen as they traverse ocean storms. But, if the fisherman does not throw a seal into the canoe at the end of the day, the entity happily eats him or turns him to stone: "A foolish, greedy man will become a rock and Sisiutl will laugh at his fate" (Richardson 236). The Makah have a ceremonial dance to request special healing power from the lightning bearer, and both Makah and Kwakwaka'wakw stories suggest its blood will make warriors stronger, if they first offer it the proper respect (Friday 256).

Clearly, Indigenous stories about this being do more than merely entertain. Candice Hopkins explains, "traditional narratives categorized as myth are not regarded as untrue by their native tellers" (341). Hopkins then adds Penny Petrone's assertion, "All Indian traditions are valid guides to reality" (Petrone 12 qtd. in Hopkins 341). Rather than a fanciful escape from the duties and difficulties of daily life, the stories are a way to understand those duties better and encourage listeners to take responsibility for their personal journeys. These journeys reflect individual development, including becoming strong and courageous, as well as making oneself vulnerable in order to learn empathy and establish a respectful, reciprocal connection to people and nature. Non-Indigenous storytelling may have similar goals, but Tamarack Song and Moses Beaver argue that settler-colonizers often treat supernatural characters and situations as the "relics of a revered, enchanted past" (11). The problem is that "in this pragmatic age we are so starved for communion with something greater and wiser than ourselves that many of us want to believe that these stories are real" instead of metaphorical (11). The need for magical beings to be "real" is an obstacle because settler-colonizers rebuff stories of supernatural entities for lack of concrete evidence. This approach "destroy[s] the potential for the communion we are seeking by taking the metaphorical mystery—the doorway to communion—and making it part of our everyday, pragmatic reality. We take the story away from the storyteller and give it to the scientist and the journalist" (11). The communion metaphor suggests that embracing the metaphysical implications of these stories can elevate one's mental, emotional, and spiritual understanding.

Grande requests that all Indigenous community members reflect on what it means to have an Indigenous self and be part of a sovereign tribe. For her, the answer must be deliberative, "an inward- and outward-looking process, a process of reenchantment, of ensoulment, that is both deeply spiritual and sincerely mindful" (57). Guiding this process is not only the people but also the location of those people's lives

and stories. The stability of the community requires they "listen to the land" (57) and not let it be devoured by capitalist interests. Margaret Kovach posits that Indigenous, decolonizing methods of processing a narrative are relational and situational, responsive to each tribe's epistemology and each person's needs. These methods rely on critical reflexivity, which "requires an awareness of the self in creating knowledge […] [and] purposefully gives space for the political examination of location and privilege." Kovach states, "our story is who we are" as individuals and communities, which raises an awareness that each person's role within a society and a natural ecosystem should be cooperative rather than central and superior.

The storytelling is communal, yet the experience it promotes is personal, private. For example, a Makah tribal member told me that if someone brags or even reveals to others that she or he acquired special healing or warrior skills from the supernatural shape-shifter, the person will lose that power. Encounter stories challenge tribal members to engage with the inner ethical and spiritual truths the being represents. When those listening to the story imagine confronting the dangerous sea creature, they are actually learning to confront their own sense of self-importance and self-doubt. Through this process, one may achieve "a sense of power" (Schwartz-Salant 117) similar to self-ownership by balancing strength and humility. This personal power may be compromised when used to "make dynamic assertions of identity, culture, and politics to White audiences" (Raibmon 11). Some "play Indian" and use stereotypes to earn an income, while others honour their heritage, challenge stereotypes, and make political statements, such as participation in the controversial Makah whale hunt. After gaining skills from the serpent-like spirit being, the warrior and the shaman use their power not for their own aggrandizement but to generously and selflessly serve others.

The aspirational nature of this approach may help Indigenous people deal with the dehumanization caused by settler-colonial society, which has discredited their traditional stories and created hierarchical binaries since first contact (Smith 31; Raibmon 7). Lisa Blee explains that putting the Indigenous on the losing end of the binaries encourages the attempted erasure of culture and renaming of landscape, which is "a process of politically (and ideologically) possessing land" (32). Activists and storytellers use Indigenous knowledge to re-establish a deeper sense of identity and place (Beinart and Hughes 320; Sleeper-Smith 2). The Sisiutl story, for example, encourages resilience through introspection and action through cultural awareness. In some versions, the serpent has a third head as depicted in Figure 4, a sculpture located at the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Center on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. While the other heads look left and right, the third head levels a terrifying stare straight at the viewer, who must face it and not back down. Confronting this

4. Dale Faulstich, "Sea Serpent," 2013. Wood. Photograph by M. Teorey. Used with written permission from artist.

fearsome spirit being heightens the viewer's self-confidence and prompts greater relational accountability among other humans and with the natural world. As Wilson states, "Rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationship that we hold and are part of" (80). Instead of following Euro-Western hierarchical binaries, those who stare down the Sisiutl (ie. confronting the binaries) gain a sense of interconnection that makes them less self-centred and more accountable to others' needs.

Being part of these relationships enhances the best qualities within a person, empowering and assisting those who are worthy. However, the two-headed sea serpent also exposes the unhealthy human impulses that lead one astray, befuddling or destroying those who are unworthy. For instance, the Salt-chuck Oluk of the Squamish people has a mouth at each end to eat everything in sight, for "they liken avarice to a slimy sea serpent" (Johnson 60). Dirty and poisonous, greed attacks one's humanity and must be fought with generosity and cooperation. Shannon Thunderbird states that snake medicine is very powerful because it teaches "that we are universal beings with ability to 'shed our skins' and experience new ways of being in the world." Shedding the coarse, ugly elements of one's identity is liberating, but it is not permanent, since self-actualization may require a continual struggle with one's

inner fear and doubt. This being has a second head where its tail should be as a sign of this internal struggle, which is significant to a person's relational development. The two heads reflect the need to balance necessary aspects of the human condition, such as warfare and cooperation, humility and self-confidence, brute force and tender compassion, vulnerability and hardiness. Furthermore, the creature's serpentine fluidity represents human mortality and a connection to the eternal, reminding one of "changes in life; death, decay and rebirth" (Anderson 15).

The Hahektoak and Sisiutl stories represent a world-view that values a deep connection to community and place. Whether the supernatural being assists wayward fishermen, strangles greedy gold-hunters, or tests prospective tribal leaders, it always insists on respect for the local ecology and the tribe's traditional and contemporary lifeways. Furthermore, it inspires ethical self-questioning and spiritual enlightenment. Through this totem figure, the spoken word becomes personally meaningful and medicinal, which Song and Beaver consider necessary for one's fulfillment as a human being: "A story that has no magic is merely talk. […] Magic is necessary because it is the only food we know of that feeds our souls. […] When we are told stories with magic, we are given glimpses of the divine within" (12). Inspirational and practical, these stories make the being both real and symbolic, a representative of the essential traits and actions each person must learn and pass on to future generations.

Based on Euro-Western rationalism, many in non-Indigenous communities consider these stories, and the sightings they're based on, to be publicity stunts or fairy tales, which only continues the attempted erasure of Indigenous stories and knowledges and the imposition of a settler-colonizer story. In the 1920s and 1930s, Port Angeles was growing and possessing more and more maritime space. Euro-Westerners were asserting themselves, building new paper mills, new dams on the Elwha River that disrupted Lower Elwha S'Klallam fishing, and a new coast guard station on Ediz Hood that displaced Indigenous residents. At the time, stories of a monstrous sea serpent created publicity for events in the town, such as an annual salmon fishing derby (Martin 162). In 2018, newspaper reports of a "Sammy" sighting in Samish Bay (Relyea) re-imposed settler-colonizer stories and interests on a contested landscape. As the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community amends its constitution to strengthen its sovereignty, Skagit County officials are concerned that the Swinomish will be able to extend its borders and reduce the county's tax revenue (Stone). The "Sammy" is a work of papier-mâché art placed in the bay, and the act of replacing it after a storm demonstrates an assertion of ownership over the space and the stories to be found there.

Euro-Western scientific and religious traditions have a long history of disparaging Indigenous stories and beliefs. Lower Elwha S'Klallam tribal elder Frances Charles connects this attitude to a deep-seated prejudice: "What [Indigenous people] have is 'just stories.' Or 'oral history.' And somehow that is not real" (Mapes xiv). Euro-Western scientific interpretations demonstrate a practice of not knowing, an "epistemology of ignorance" (Sullivan and Tuana 1) that feeds the domination and silencing of Indigenous knowledge systems. Even cryptozoologists, who accept the possibility of a giant sea serpent, reject Indigenous stories about it. They turn instead to a rational explanation of what they will only accept as a natural entity, whether reptile or "merhorse" fish-mammal (Drinnon). Eyewitnesses often claim it has a horse-like head and mane, but list other characteristics consistent with those of a dinosaur-serpent. Daniel Loxton and Donald Prothero theorize that it is no coincidence sightings of this seemingly pre-historic beast were reported just after the release of the film *King Kong* (1933), in which a similar creature attacks a ship sailing to Kong's home on Skull Island (244). The implication is that people who saw something unexplainable must have jumped to an unreasonable conclusion, excited by images they saw in a film. Regardless of whether they saw a floating log or the Sisiutl itself, settler-colonial scholarship rejects the possibility of a supernatural being, attributing it to superstition or delusion. Even by relating it to the dinosaurs, a relic of the distant but documented past, the academy is able to contain and disempower the unexplained entity.

The first known non-Indigenous "Caddy" sighting was in 1791 by a crewman of the fur trading ship *Columbia* (Eberhart 79). The earliest published scholarship of the Sisiutl's cultural influence appeared in the journal *Science* in 1887 ("Ethnological"). The unnamed author reduces the Indigenous story and its storytellers to basic facts without context or discussion of Indigenous spiritual beliefs. The following year, famed anthropologist Franz Boas documented a dance of the Kwakwaka'wakw people that included a "carved wooden snake with two heads—the fabulous Sisiutl" (50). Boas's analysis of this "primitive people" (51) recounts their folkloric stories from the vantage of academic curiosity and superiority without giving the beliefs credence or considering the social or spiritual lessons they convey. More recent scholarly work on topics like earthquakes and tsunamis still recognizes this hierarchy, with geologic, ecologic, historic, archeologic, and seismic data ranking above the oral retellings of so-called mythical beings and events. In their *Ethnohistory* article, Alan McMillan and Ian Hutchinson do praise the few scholars who have accepted that "Native traditional knowledge offers a valid approach to understanding past and present phenomena in their environments" (61-62). However, their own analysis of the natural disasters described in Indigenous oral narratives privileges Euro-Western epistemology and

essentializes Euro-Western thought. The traditional stories help researchers tell their own story of historic seismic events in the region, but Indigenous interpretations and spiritual applications of the stories are largely disregarded. Kovach argues that academia needs to disrupt the hegemonic epistemology so that it "is not extractive and is accountable to Indigenous community standards on research so as to honour the tribal worldview" (29). Unfortunately, the scientific community will only accept Caddy as an "animal" they can classify, so they do "not dramatically violate any current deep-rooted scientific wisdom" (Swords 100).

Of course, many European folkloric traditions once portrayed the sea serpent as a potent supernatural figure. Thus, the Loch Ness monster is only one of many magical creatures inhabiting Scotland's waterways. Similar to the shape-shifting Sisiutl, Scottish folklore tells of dangerous water spirits like Kelpies, which shape shift into horse or human form, and Selkies, which shape shift into seal or human form ("Selkies"). These spirit beings reflect "the ever-present struggle between good and evil in the human psyche" (Greenway xix). Other European coastal and sea-going cultures have their own ancestral stories of helpful and harmful sea serpents. Although the modern emphasis on rationalism and empiricism has caused many to reject these "myths" as meaningless superstition, there remains a craving for the supernatural as metaphor and spirit guide. Paige Raibmon notes that this urge largely fixes Indigenous cultures in a romanticized past and commodifies them for the benefit of settler-colonizers. Philip Deloria, in *Playing Indian,* chronicles this alternating appropriation and destruction of "Indianness" as the desired or despised symbol and costume of the American identity for two centuries (5).

Some contemporary settler-colonial storytellers have appropriated the two-headed, shape-shifting sea serpent for their own purposes. In her 1978 award-winning novel *Dreamspeaker,* Anne Cameron inserts the malevolent Sisiutl as a warning against the divisive and destructive elements of a corrupt settler-colonial value system. In interviews, Cameron has expressed a deep respect for Indigenous beliefs and traditions, yet she was asked not to speak for Indigenous peoples after retelling a number of local Indigenous stories in her 1981 book *Daughters of Copper Woman* (H. Lutz 139). Despite her love for these stories, Cameron employs a Eurocentric view in *Dreamspeaker,* which treats Indigenous peoples as a mere projection of disharmony in the white psyche, a way to deal with their own issues instead of gaining a true Indigenous perspective (Younging 2). From the start, the young protagonist Peter is stalked by a two-headed, shape-shifting snake spirit that represents a sickness Euro-Western society imposed on him, a spiritual emptiness and self-destructiveness born from the "snake of traffic" (Hubert 1) and the settler-colonizers' big wars (41).

Cameron reduces the Nuu-chah-nulth Elder to a wise spirit-guide and father figure, advising Peter that the Sisiutl "haunts him because he has not adjusted to the unnatural life of modern society" (Leach 203). Through the spectre of the Sisiutl, the novel does challenge some settler-colonial attitudes, such as a longstanding historical arrogance: "When Europeans began colonizing various parts of the world, they often naively assumed that they were too smart to learn anything from the people who already lived there" ("Native American" 99). Peter does attempt to develop a respectful relationship to place, stare down his fears, and reject the influence of a selfish, cruel, careless, destructive Euro-Western culture, yet this white character's redemption requires the appropriation and exploitation of Indigenous beliefs.

Despite the continued disrespect settler-colonizer communities show Indigenous peoples, some Euro-Westerners appreciate having experienced the unexplainable, i.e., sighting the mysterious Cadborosaurus, and join others who are sympathetic of Indigenous spiritualities. In the end, the issue is not whether people actually see the supernatural being, but whether their communities accept or repudiate that experience. Unlike mainstream scientists, cryptozoologists validate these sightings, but more as proof that a prehistoric marvel of the natural world actually exists than out of respect for Indigenous cultures or spiritualities. Mindful of the prejudice and disrespect they face, a group of Indigenous researchers and academics are trying to build a relationship with the settler-colonials who admit these supernatural beings exist and seek to learn cultural knowledge in a respectful, non-possessive way. Their efforts to indigenize the academy have begun to inspire a few Euro-Western scientists and scholars to become more interested in building cross-cultural relationships that value and respect Indigenous perspectives.

To conclude, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples watch the waterways of the Northwest coast today, excited by the possibility of seeing a giant serpent-like being. Each community assigns symbolic importance to the creature, but each has different views about its existence as a supernatural being. For many Indigenous people, the entity defies confinement and individual interpretation; it is dynamic and complex, an experience rather than a provable fact. Narratives unite the community around a figure that teaches cultural enlightenment and inspires people to seek abilities that benefit the group and help them "overcome the overwhelming" (Arnett and Morin 117) of the human experience. Thus, its reality is relational, including connections to place and contributions to community. For many Euro-Westerners, reality is measured by empirical evidence and people seek individual, personal acclaim within a competitive culture. The Cadborosaurus must have a verifiable physical presence or

it cannot exist, and only someone who can provide empirical evidence of its materiality, or disprove someone else's evidence, can assert cultural (and financial) ownership over the creature and its lore. Most settler-colonizers consider the Sisiutl stories entertaining but not instructive, ignoring the lessons it can teach.

Immediate change of the settler-colonial paradigm is unlikely, but a willingness to learn from different perspectives might encourage the development of "the multicultural self, the ecological self, or the self-transforming self" (Canty 15). Contesting the arrogant Euro-Western sense of place ownership and cultural superiority may help build better relationships and ameliorate current ecological, social, and personal crises. In support of this new sense of selfhood, Indigenous academics like Wilson, Kovach, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and Devon Abbott Mihesuah aim to indigenize the academy by "working to change universities so that they become places where the values, principles, and modes of organization and behavior of [Indigenous] people are respected in, and hopefully even integrated into, the larger system of structures and processes that make up the university itself" (Alfred 88). Younging states that some in the Euro-Western scientific and academic establishment now realize that "Traditional Knowledge is integral to human survival" (13). Grande is more ambivalent about the academy's ability and commitment to remedying the "miseducation" (11) of and about Indigenous peoples. She warns that despite recent educational reform, neocolonial attitudes and practices persist in marginalizing Indigenous peoples and cultures, and perhaps resistance is a better option than accommodation and assimilation. One historical problem, as suggested by Lee Maracle, is that change has occurred only on the Indigenous side, leading to colonial mimicry (Horne 111).

However, Kovach suggests the academy may be ready to act in good faith: "there is a desire among a growing community of non-Indigenous academics to move beyond the binaries found within Indigenous-settler relations to construct new, mutual forms of dialogue, research, theory, and action" (12). For example, a group of scientists within the academy seeks to protect place from environmental degradation. Among them is the deep ecology movement, which combines scientific inquiry and "the epistemological and spiritual approaches of Indigenous peoples" (Smith and Gough 47) to form "a metaphysical connection to the earth" (38). Of course, well-intentioned Euro-Westerners often romanticize Indigenous peoples and their beliefs, which turns "the ecologically sensitive native […] [into] the new noble savage" (Schultz 135). This route may not lead to respect and collaboration.

The cultural work to attain this paradigm shift is not easy. Ending the cycle of appropriation and misuse of Indigenous traditions requires greater awareness of Eurocentrism and recognition of its destructiveness. Understanding and learning from

Indigenous knowledges requires humility and respect, two things antithetical to the academy and mainstream culture. Moreover, making a meaningful connection to place requires relational accountability, another challenge since "many things in our modern world try to force us to be separated, isolated individuals" (Wilson 137). As Wilson asserts, humans must re-establish relationships with ourselves, each other, the natural world, and our spirituality in order to communicate across cultures and provide a better future. The appearances of a supernatural two-headed sea serpent symbolize the challenge to all people, scholars included, to face our fears and seek to balance the relational with the rational, and the sacred with the scientific. Only then can we begin to establish trust that may lead to a more cooperative and sustainable future.[1]

NOTE

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